

ACT 48 PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION PLAN GUIDELINES

March 2007



Pennsylvania Department of Education

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I. INTRODUCTION

Ensuring that all Pennsylvania children receive the high-quality education that they deserve requires an effective teacher in every classroom and school and district leadership that is focused on raising achievement. The Commonwealth's educators – from the classroom teacher to the district superintendent – are the most important components of Pennsylvania's strategy for educational success.

As professionals in an ever-changing knowledge-based society, the state's educators are required to continuously upgrade their skill-set – just as it is an expectation for lawyers and doctors. Pennsylvania's professional development law, known as Act 48 of 1999, describes the requirements that apply to all certified educational professionals.

The professional education plan of each school entity shall be designed to meet the education needs of that school entity and its professional employees, so that they may meet the specific needs of students. Professional development must be based on sound research and promising practices, and it must be part of an approved plan for building educators' skills over the long term.

Each school entity in Pennsylvania – including school districts, intermediate units, area career and technical centers and charter schools, the Scotland School and the Scranton State School for the Deaf – is required to submit a Professional Education Plan to the Pennsylvania Department of Education. The Pennsylvania Department of Education will approve or reject each plan; a plan that is rejected must be revised and resubmitted. The Professional Education Plan sets out each school entity's strategy for training school personnel at all stages of their careers. School entities are required to examine their student-level data, determine their professional education goals from the data, design an action plan with activities that meet their identified needs, and then evaluate the effectiveness of the training.

All certified educators must then complete every five years 180 hours of professional development that is related to an area of the professional educator's assignment or certification and, if the educator is employed by a school entity, complies with their school entity's plan. The 180-hour requirement can be met with six college credits, six credits of continuing professional education courses, 180 clock hours of continuing professional education, or any combination of collegiate studies, continuing professional education courses or other programs, activities or learning experiences equivalent to 180 hours. For the purposes of calculating hours and credits, one credit of collegiate study or continuing professional education course is equivalent to 30 hours of continuing professional education.

This document is intended as a guide to help school entities and educators meet the professional education requirements of Act 48 and – most importantly – continue their professional growth in order to increase the achievement levels of the Commonwealth's students.

II. PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION CRITERIA

In evaluating each school entity's Professional Education Plan, the Department of Education will determine whether plans meet the following criteria:

A. Professional development decisions are based on student needs and evaluated using student data. Approved professional development:

- A1. Uses disaggregated student data to determine educators' learning priorities
- A2. Is evaluated to show its impact on teaching practice and student learning

B. Professional development activities have content that will increase student learning. Approved professional development:

For classroom teachers, school counselors and education specialists:

- B1. Enhances the educator's content knowledge in the area of the educator's certification or assignment
- B2. Increases the educator's teaching skills based on research on effective practice, with attention given to interventions for struggling students
- B3. Provides educators with a variety of classroom-based assessment skills and the skills needed to analyze and use data in instructional decision-making
- B4. Empowers educators to work effectively with parents and community partners

For school and district administrators, and other educators seeking leadership roles:

- B5. Provides the knowledge and skills to think and plan strategically, ensuring that assessments, curriculum, instruction, staff professional education, teaching materials and interventions for struggling students are aligned to each other as well as to Pennsylvania's academic standards
- B6. Provides leaders with the ability to access and use appropriate data to inform decision-making
- B7. Empowers leaders to create a culture of teaching and learning, with an emphasis on learning
- B8. Instructs the leader in managing resources for effective results

C. Professional development is provided through a process that is most likely to result in sustained school improvement. Approved professional development:

- C1. Is set out in a plan that is updated annually by the Act 48 Committee after the committee critically evaluates the prior year's
 - student data,
 - professional education activities, and
 - the feedback/evaluation of those activities
- C2. Is based on knowledge of adult learning styles
- C3. Is tailored to each stage of an educator's career, differentiating between the needs of novice and experienced professionals

III. ALLOWABLE PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION ACTIVITIES

In order to meet the Content criteria outlined in Section II, a school entity's Professional Education Plan must comply with the following:

Early Childhood, Elementary and Secondary Educators (including Special Education)

To receive Department approval, a school entity Professional Education plan must include strategies for all classroom teachers to enhance their content area knowledge and pedagogical skills, with particular attention to the needs of diverse learners who are below proficient or below grade-level.

Content Area

All early childhood, elementary and secondary educators will be expected to participate in content-specific professional development within their area of certification or assigned work over the course of the Professional Education Plan. All teachers certified in Special Education are encouraged to obtain at least half of their required hours for Act 48 in one or more academic content areas.

Examples of Acceptable Activities:

- Building knowledge of literacy, mathematics and science-specific content
- Building knowledge of specific content in other areas covered by the Pennsylvania academic standards, for teachers who are assigned to those areas
- Curriculum development aligned with Pennsylvania standards
- Data analysis training (all aspects of assessment and evaluation)

Examples of Unacceptable Activities:

- Courses taken outside of an area of certification or work assignment, except for school administration
- Any courses/programs for personal growth or an alternative career
- Repeat of awareness-level introductory courses, e.g., Introduction to Computers
- Teacher/parent student conferences, grade book analysis, and preparation of report cards
- Repeating a course or program unless it has significantly changed its focus or approach

Teaching Practices

All early childhood, elementary and secondary educators will be expected to participate in professional development activities that advance high-quality classroom instruction over the course of the Professional Education Plan.

Examples of Acceptable Activities:

- Training in assessing students and analyzing student data to implement effective change in instruction
- Observing exemplary school and classroom practices and collaboratively designing instructional strategies based on analysis of the observed experience
- Training to align and embed literacy, mathematics and science standards and instructional strategies within other academic content areas
- Acquiring technology skills and designing strategies to integrate technology into the instructional setting
- Creating shared lessons that help students learn specific skills that assessments identify as weak or lacking
- Acquiring secondary strategies to increase student engagement and personalize learning
- Training in how to create safe and welcoming learning environments
- Improving understanding of the academic, social, emotional and physical needs of all learners.
- Developing knowledge and skills in how to involve families and other stakeholders in the educational process
- Training in dealing with non-academic issues that may affect learning (grief counseling, intervening in student-on-student harassment, etc.)
- School or district-wide planning (strategic, professional development, induction, special education, gifted education, school improvement, interventions for struggling students, technology, student support, and wellness)

Examples of Unacceptable Activities:

- Instruction time, serving as a mentor or cooperating teacher
- Attending administrative faculty meetings with superintendent or principal
- Supervision of school field trips
- Tutoring
- Tours of school buildings
- Preparing and presenting college course lessons
- Extra curricular assignments (coaching or advising of sports, drama, debate, clubs or student government)

Meeting the Needs of Diverse Learners

All teachers certified in early childhood, elementary or secondary education (including special education) should participate in continued education focused on enhancing their ability to teach diverse learners in inclusive settings – with a focus on students who are below proficient or below grade-level – i.e., those who, because of gender, ethnic background, socioeconomic status, learning styles, limited English language proficiency or disabilities, may have academic needs that require varied instructional strategies to help them learn. An inclusive setting is the placement of students with disabilities and English language learners in a regular classroom setting.

School and District Administrators

All Act 48 activity must meet the Pennsylvania Inspired Leadership (PIL) core standards, as described in criteria B5 through B8.

Examples of Acceptable Activities:

- Training to facilitate staff analysis of student work
- Training related to strategies, curricula and programs that meet student academic needs
- Effective coaching practices for proven strategies that boost student performance
- Identifying the needs of student subgroups and effective strategies for meeting those needs
- Training to implement state school improvement planning processes
- Collaborative work with parents and community partners to develop collective efforts focused on the achievement rate of student subgroups
- School- or district-wide planning (strategic, professional development, induction, special education, school improvement, interventions for struggling students, technology and student support, wellness)
- Training on legal issues, governance and Board/Superintendent relationships

Examples of Unacceptable Activities:

- IU Superintendent meetings
- Equipment expositions
- Undefined off-site retreats

School Counselors

All elementary, middle and secondary school counselors will be expected to participate in content-specific professional development applicable to their assigned level of work over the course of the Professional Education Plan. This professional development should include studies to build capacity to address the needs of diverse learners who are below proficient or below grade-level – i.e., those who, because of gender, ethnic background, socioeconomic status, learning styles, limited English language proficiency or disabilities, may have academic needs that require varied instructional strategies to help them learn.

Professional Development Options Applicable at All Levels (Pre-K – 12)

Examples of Acceptable Activities:

- Advocacy processes needed to address institutional and social barriers that impede access, equity, and success for students
- Training that provides an understanding of the cultural context of relationships, issues and trends in a multicultural, diverse society
- Study of developmental disorders
- Training to disaggregate data in relation to student achievement
- Working with instructional teams to develop curriculum/lesson plans
- Training that builds capacity to collaborate with teams of teachers, school leadership and parents
- Design and implementation of a comprehensive, data-driven school counseling program
- Training in the facilitation and evaluation of advisory programs
- Training that deals with special needs like homelessness, adolescent depression, etc.
- Career development program: planning, organization, implementation, administration and evaluation
- School or district-wide planning and team planning activities (strategic, professional development, induction, special education, gifted education, school improvement, interventions for struggling students, technology, student support, and wellness) with other professional employees, where those professional employees are receiving Act 48 credit

Examples of Unacceptable Activities:

- Undefined counselor workshops
- Sheltered workshop visitation
- Undefined district meeting
- Sorting PSSA reports
- Undefined hot topics seminar
- Supervision of visits to career sites/colleges
- Career Day monitoring
- Parents Anonymous Meeting
- Community center evening work
- Undefined independent studies abroad

Educational Specialists, excluding School Counselors

[http://www.teaching.state.pa.us/teaching/cwp/view.asp?a=3&Q=22599&teachingNav=\[93|94\]\)](http://www.teaching.state.pa.us/teaching/cwp/view.asp?a=3&Q=22599&teachingNav=[93|94]))

Educational specialists, other than school counselors, must participate in professional development activities that enhance their ability to meet the demonstrated needs of the students and families they serve in order to increase the ability of students to succeed academically.

Content knowledge for education specialists may include training in how to reduce health problems and prevent health risk behaviors that delay student learning.

Examples of Acceptable Activities:

- Identifying the health and social services needs and assets of students, families, schools and communities by using various types of data
- Training to acquire health risk reduction and prevention strategies
- Study of school-based health programs at state and national levels
- Student Assistance Program training
- Learning how to implement school-wide programs and classroom management strategies designed to improve student conduct
- Studies related to cross-organizational professional development on social and health services issues
- Prevention training on contemporary health issues affecting school age children
- Training for emergency preparedness: CPR/AED training and certification updates
- Professional education programs that grant Continuing Education Units (CEUs) for purpose of licensure
- School- or district-wide planning (strategic, professional development, induction, special education, gifted education, school improvement, technology and student support, wellness)

Examples of Unacceptable Activities:

- Independent studies
- Union related bargaining behavior studies

IV. PREPARING THE PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION PLAN

Developing the Professional Education Plan

All professional development activities should be customized to meet the range of needs of the school entity and its professional employees, so that they may meet the specific needs of students.

Professional Education Plans must be created using the following steps, and each must be documented in the school entity's submission to the Department:

1. Identify the student learning needs that the professional development will address, by
 - a. Citing the specific student achievement data or other student/school/community data. For all classroom teachers and other certified staff who work directly with students in academic subjects, the minimally acceptable data are PSSA results in subjects and grade levels where they are available, and if available, associated benchmark assessments (e.g. 4sight). In other subjects and grade levels, the district will rely on other standardized tests, benchmark assessments, local assessments and, if necessary because other assessments are not given, classroom assessments; and
 - b. Describing the need for professional development that is shown by the data, including which Professional Development Content Criteria the activity meets;
2. Indicate which groups of educators will participate in the activity;
3. Describe the proposed professional development activity, including the knowledge and skills that educators will gain. An activity could be a course, a multi-session program, or other specific planned set of activities or instruction – each must be documented;
 - A course is a series of lessons offered for credit by a college/university or intermediate unit where each credit is equivalent to 14 hours of study and 16 hours of related assignments culminating in an evaluated final product.
 - A program is a series of related continuing professional education events with a common theme and outcome that are offered for the specific number of hours, but it is recommended that they be at least 3.5 hours in length.
 - Activities are the components of programs such as training sessions, specific and relevant conference sessions, walk-throughs, and the alignment of curriculum and standards.
4. Describe the follow-up activities that will ensure successful implementation;
5. Provide the name of the professional development provider and whether the provider has been approved by the Department of Education. If the provider has not received PDE

approval, then the Professional Development Plan will need to include a copy of the Pennsylvania Professional Education Provider Application (refer to the Act 48 Approved Provider Guidelines) approved by the school entity; and

6. Specify the method that will be used for evaluating the effectiveness of the professional development activity in addressing the needs identified in 1 above.

Professional Education Committee

In school districts where a School Improvement Committee has been established, the School Improvement Committee should provide input to the Professional Education Committee before the Plan is submitted to the board of school directors for approval. The School Improvement Committee should be held responsible for ensuring that the Plan is designed to achieve the district or school's improvement goals and that it is aligned with the strategies for improvement.

A school entity's Professional Education Plan must be prepared by a committee consisting of:

- Teacher representatives divided equally among elementary, middle, and high school teachers, chosen by the teachers;
- Educational specialist representatives, chosen by educational specialists;
- Administrative representatives, chosen by the administrators of the school entity;
- Parents of children attending a school in the district, appointed by the board of school directors;
- Local business representatives, appointed by the board of school directors; and
- Other individuals representing the community, appointed by the board of school directors.

The Department of Education recommends that the Professional Education Committee also obtain input from early childhood education educators and community partners and, when applicable, representatives from tutoring programs.

The Professional Education Committee is responsible for:

- Establishing operating functions/subcommittees
- Conducting a needs assessment and setting clear goals for professional education
- Creating a delivery system for approved professional education that is designed to meet the identified needs of students
- Preparing the Plan aligned with the district's Chapter 4 Strategic Plan
- Signing-off on the Professional Education Plan and submitting it for approval by the school board
- Reviewing the Plan annually making revisions as needed

Needs Assessment and Goal Setting

The Professional Education Committee must assess the educational and staff development needs of the school entity and its professional educators, students and the community. The needs assessment must be data-driven and identify the staff development needed to achieve the academic standards and goals of the entity's strategic plan.

After the educational and staff development needs have been evaluated, goals must be established for the three-year Professional Education Plan. This includes setting goals for students and goals for staff that support achievement of the goals for all students.

Delivery System

When the professional education needs and goals have been identified, the plan to achieve the goals must be designed. The delivery system should create learning communities, be intensive, and be based on data that indicate it will lead to higher achievement. Opportunities for implementation of new knowledge and skills must be provided to ensure that they are mastered, applied, and result in student success.

Options for professional education delivery may include, but shall not be limited to:

1. Collegiate studies from nationally accredited colleges/universities
2. Continuing professional education courses taken for credit
3. Other programs, activities or learning experiences taken for hourly reporting that comply with the requirements of these guidelines

If a school entity has a significant proportion of students with limited English proficiency and/or students who are English language learners, the Professional Education Plan must include strategies that are designed to meet the needs of these students and that are demonstrated to be effective in the removal of language barriers.

Professional Education Plans that are focused, measurable and specific are most likely to achieve their goals. Therefore, action plans to achieve the professional education goals over three years should be developed and included in the Plan.

Evaluation and Revision

Professional Education Plans must be reviewed annually and revised as needed. The review should include evaluation of the goals, activities, and delivery system, and attainment of the competencies for each activity. Use of the five levels of evaluation of professional development is also recommended. These include:

- 1) student outcomes,
- 2) participants' use of new knowledge and skills,
- 3) participants' learning,
- 4) participant reaction, and
- 5) organization support and change.

Amendments to the plan must be recommended by the Professional Education Committee, approved by the board of directors, and submitted to the Department for approval.

Approval and Submission

The Professional Education Plan will be approved by the Professional Education Committee first and then submitted for approval of the board of directors of the school entity prior to its web-based submission to the Department of Education for approval.

The Department of Education will review and approve or reject all Professional Education Plans. Plans that are rejected shall be amended and resubmitted for approval. The provisions of section 2552 of the School Code (24 P.S. § 25-2552) regarding withholding of funds apply to any school entity that fails to submit a Professional Education Plan or fails to achieve subsequent approval for a Professional Education Plan that is initially rejected by the Department of Education.

APPENDIX A: PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION PLAN FORMAT

Professional Education Plans will be completed online through the Department of Education eStrategic Planning platform. For each activity selected, the Professional Education Plan will include the information below. An activity could be a course, a multi-session program, or other specific planned set of activities or instruction – each activity must be documented.

STEP 1: Identify the specific student needs that the professional development will address.

Cite specific student achievement data or other student/school/community data. For all classroom teachers and other certified staff who work directly with students in academic subjects, the minimally acceptable data are PSSA results in subjects and grade levels where they are available and, if available, associated benchmark assessments (e.g., 4sight). In other subjects and grade levels, the district will rely on other standardized tests, benchmark assessments, local assessments and, if necessary because other assessments are not given, classroom assessments.

Describe the need(s) for professional development that is shown by the data.

Specify what the professional development activity you select will be designed to accomplish:

For classroom teachers, school counselors and education specialists:

- ☐ B1. Enhances the educator's content knowledge in the area of the educator's certification or assignment
- ☐ B2. Increases the educator's teaching skills based on research on effective practice
- ☐ B3. Provides educators with a variety of classroom-based assessment skills and the skills needed to analyze and use data in instructional decision-making

☐ B4. Empowers educators to work effectively with parent and community partners

For school and district administrators, and other educators seeking leadership roles:

☐ B5. Provides the knowledge and skills to think and plan strategically, ensuring that assessments, curriculum, instruction, staff professional education, teaching materials and interventions for struggling students are aligned to each other as well as to Pennsylvania's academic standards

☐ B6. Provides leaders with the ability to access and use appropriate data to inform decision-making

☐ B7. Empowers leaders to create a culture of teaching and learning, with an emphasis on learning

☐ B8. Instructs the leader in managing resources for effective results

STEP 2: Indicate which group of educators will participate in the professional development activity.

Role: ☐ Classroom Teachers ☐ Principals / Assistant Principals
☐ Superintendent / Asst. Superintendents ☐ School Counselors
☐ Other Educational Specialists

Grade Level (if applicable):

☐ Early childhood (preK-grade 3) ☐ Elementary (grades 2-5)
☐ Middle (grades 6-8) ☐ High school (grades 9-12)

If specific to one or more content areas for which Pennsylvania has adopted academic standards, indicate the subject area or areas:

☐ Pre-Kindergarten Early Learning Standards ☐ Kindergarten Early Learning Standards
☐ Reading, Writing, Speaking & Listening ☐ Mathematics
☐ Science and Technology ☐ History

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Arts & Humanities | <input type="checkbox"/> Career Education and Work |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Civics and Government | <input type="checkbox"/> Economics |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Environment and Ecology | <input type="checkbox"/> Family and Consumer Sciences |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Health, Safety and Physical Education | <input type="checkbox"/> Geography |
| <input type="checkbox"/> World Languages | |

Estimated number of participants per year.

STEP 3: Specify the professional development program, including the knowledge and skills that educators will gain in this series of activities.

Provide the name and description of the program, course or activity

List the knowledge and skills that educators will gain as a result of participating in the activity.

Briefly describe how the content is based on research or best practices.

Indicate the program or course duration.

Number of hours per session

Total number of sessions per school year

STEP 4: Indicate the follow-up activities participants will engage in to ensure successful implementation.

☐

Team development and sharing of content-area lesson implementation outcomes, with involvement of administrator and/or peers

☐

Analysis of student work, with administrator and/or peers

☐

Creating lessons to meet varied student learning styles

☐

Peer-to-peer lesson discussions

☐

Lesson modeling with mentoring

☐

Journaling and reflecting

☐

Other, specify _____

STEP 5: Provide the name of the professional development provider and whether the provider has been approved by the Department of Education.

Organization or Institution Name:

Type of Provider:

☐

School entity

☐

Intermediate unit

☐

Individual

☐

College or university

☐

Association

☐

Company

☐

Non-profit organization

Provider's Department of Education approval status:

☐

Approved

☐

Not Approved

If not approved by Department of Education, the provider's Pennsylvania Professional Education Provider Application – as approved by the school entity – must be included with this Plan.

STEP 6: Identify the tools the district will use to evaluate the effectiveness of the professional development activity in addressing the needs identified in Step 1.

Indicate which of the following evaluation methods will be used to determine the effectiveness of the professional development (select all that apply):

☐

Classroom observation focusing on factors such as planning and preparation, knowledge of content, pedagogy and standards, classroom environment, instructional delivery and professionalism.

☐

Student PSSA data

☐

Standardized student assessment data other than the PSSA

☐

Classroom student assessment data

☐

Participant survey

☐

Review of participant lesson plans

☐

Review of written reports summarizing instructional activity

☐

Portfolio

☐

Other: _____ Describe

Other: _____ Describe

Each School Entity is responsible to provide an annual update on the following information provided on this page.

APPENDIX B

SCHOOL ENTITY INFORMATION PAGE

School Entity: _____

Address: _____

_____ Zip Code _____

Chief School Administrator: _____

Telephone: (____) - _____ E-mail: _____

Fax: (____)- _____

Committee Chairperson: _____

Telephone: (____)-_____ E-mail: _____

Fax: (____)- _____

Act 48 Reporting Contact: _____

Telephone: (____)-_____ E-mail: _____

Fax: (____)- _____

Note: Required with each new plan submission

Appendix C: Professional Education Plan Assurances: (New/Replaces Professional Education Plan Signature Form)

APPENDIX C

PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION PLAN ASSURANCES

We affirm that this Professional Education Plan focuses on the learning needs of each staff member to ensure all staff members meet or exceed high academic standards in each of the core subject areas.

Signature	Professional Education Committee Chairperson	Date
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I affirm that this Professional Education Plan provides staff learning that improves the learning of all students as outlined in the National Staff Development Council's Standards for Staff Learning.

Signature	Superintendent or Chief Administrative Officer	Date
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We affirm that this Professional Education Plan has been developed in accordance with the laws, regulations and guidelines for the development, implementation and evaluation of the Professional Education Plan as designated in Chapter 4 of the Regulations of the Pennsylvania State Board of Education.

Signature	President of the Board of School Directors	Date
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